

# St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Commission Quarterly Commission Meeting

April 24, 2026 | 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm | Virtual

**Mission:** The St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Commission (VPC) works to reduce violent crime in the region by promoting and advocating a coordinated, well – resourced support system, policies, and interventions among area governments, institutions and agencies that serve individuals and families most at risk of violent crime.

**Vision:** VPC envisions a St. Louis region where communities enjoy quiet nights and the sounds of children playing during the days. St. Louis is a safe and desirable destination for businesses and residents. All community members feel protected and served by law enforcement and empowered to have a voice in important regional issues.

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## AGENDA:

### 1. Welcome & Introductions

- VPC Team: Jessica Meyers, Serena Muhammad, Lisa Potts, Cameron Saari, Caitlyn Duncan
- Attendees: Kaitlyn Hayden, Eboni Hooper Boateng, Karin Kitson, Rachel Bray, Ebtihal Al-Alwi, Anna Muckerman, Poli Rijos, Katie Small, Terry Daily Davis, Kalonda Kent, Sarolyn Fox, Craig Schmid, Hannah Sherrard, Cat Pitman, Kateri Chapman-Kramer, Tiffany Blanford, Alice Dyle, Velma Bailey, Matthew Holden, Asia McKenzie, Courtney Hinton, Mikayla Johnson, Tom Crees, Stacy Bernaugh, Teona McGhaw, Dr. Danielle Binion, LaKeisha Turner, Tashauna Parker, Sal Martinez, Julia Fleckman, David Bryant, Karen Aroesty, MaChelle West, Kyla Kikkawa, Conal Montgomery, Arthurine Harris, Paula Gaertner, Molly Imming, Calencia Mitchell, Destiny Green, Dr. Kem Smith, Kat Cocivera, Rep. Rachel Proudie, Brittany Alberty, Anjanette Washington

### 2. Youth Events Strategy Up To Now

- See meeting powerpoint.
- The goal of youth events is to not only provide a safe space, but also give high risk youth a space in which to build protective, trusting relationships with caring adults and to reduce risky behavior.
- Differences between City summer strategy and County summer strategy
  - In the City, we had consistent street outreach and promoters who knew high-risk youth to get the word out
    - Street outreach workers counseling youth who brought guns and set up safe passage for youth
    - Youth were able to build relationships with the street outreach team members and security
    - What worked in the City was having adults (security, street outreach) who are experienced with youth. Almost all youth brought alcohol or other substances that were confiscated before they could enter the event.
  - In the County, we mostly worked through County organizations

- There was no street outreach team to reach out to high-risk youth
  - Youth who attended were not the high-risk or “troublemakers”
- Question to VPC: Are events scheduled out so youth and parents know of the whole schedule?
  - Answer: They are posted to the VPC website, but that is not necessarily a destination for people to look. Also, these are not designed to be parent drop off events. Our operating assumption is that youth who have parents to identify opportunities, drive them, drop them off, and pick them up are not at the highest risk.
- Question to VPC: How much transportation is available?
  - Answer: We have not provided transportation assistance. In the City, many youth came in Uber or Lyfts. There were some concerns in previous years about crossing boundaries/territories on foot at certain sites. Also, we are prioritizing older youth who can get their own rides or drive themselves, not younger youth who need parents to drive them.
- Question to VPC: Do you have youth ambassadors?
  - Answer: VPC has youth review grants, but we recognize that they are not necessarily high-risk. VPC has resisted forming a youth council for a couple reasons- there are already multiple that we can draw opinions from and most youth on those councils are high-achievers, not the priority youth we are trying to reach.
- Question to VPC: Have you explored lock ins?
  - Answer: We looked into them, but staffing was not available to accommodate them.
- Question to VPC: Have you done engagement with attendees to determine what worked or what youth want to see?
  - Answer: The street outreach workers followed up with youth in previous summers. Additionally, we have also recently started asking young people the types of events that they would like to see as they are checking in at events. The top two interest areas are currently- skating parties and outdoor movie night. We are currently looking for organizational partners who want to host these type of events.
- Question to VPC: Are you utilizing TikTok and Instagram?
  - VPC has Instagram, but not TikTok. We rely on other organizational partners to promote if they have those.

### 3. County Youth Strategy Discussion

- **Question to Attendees: How can VPC support St. Louis County and their youth?**
- **Question to Attendees: How have you seen effective outreach with county youth?**
  - From David Bryant- no magic strategy. If youth are not involved in planning, they will make their own plans and that is often when tragedy happens.
  - From Kalonda & Tashauna- Gamer’s Island has youth as employees that do outreach. The biggest turnout from last summer was the talent show. Parents wanted to attend, but were not allowed. It might be good to provide for a space for parents alongside youth.

- From Danielle- School counselors and educators have been a great resource in our work in connecting with young people. They have the relationships and knowledge of the family dynamics. They are often deeply connected even over the summer.
- Potential sources of referrals identified by attendees:
  - Juvenile Division
  - Foster Care System
  - Apartment Complexes
  - School Districts
  - Pastors
  - Safe Connections Project HART educators
  - Regional Youth Employment Coalition (facilitated by BioSTL)
  - Youth Behavioral Health Liaisons
    - Youth Behavioral Health Liaisons (YBHLs) are community-employed mental health professionals who support youth experiencing behavioral health, including mental health and substance use challenges, by quickly connecting them and their families with resources within their community.
    - <https://dmh.mo.gov/media/pdf/youth-behavioral-health-liaisons-and-schools-flyer>
    - To find your YBHL, use this map: <https://mbhc21.wixsite.com/website-3>
  - Peak Trauma Response @ People's Health Center
- **Question to Attendees: To what degree should we plan for parental involvement vs youth only in the context of parents who contribute to their children's risky behaviors?**
  - From Matthew: It would be interesting to know what kind of supports parents of youth/teens need to help them thrive and in turn support their children
  - From David- in most cases he saw, parents were not involved in the youth's lives to the extent that would have prevented their risky behavior.
  - From Velma- parents who brought kids to her events had a parallel track, like pampering activities or skill building.
- **Question to Attendees: How do we incentivize parent participation?**
  - Financial incentives
  - Food
  - Activities for their kids
  - Partner with resources like utilities to get bills paid
- Organizations represented in the meeting:
  - St. Louis Mental Health Board
  - National Council of Jewish Women
  - Episcopal Diocese
  - Community Health Commission of Missouri
  - St. Louis Torchbearers
  - Gamers Island/New Avenue Inc.
  - Paraquad
  - Conflict Resolution Center

- Washington University
- Life Outside of Violence
- Safe Connections
- St. Louis County Children's Services Fund
- St. Louis County Department of Public Health
- St. Louis Artworks
- Urban Strategies
- Gene Slay Girls & Boys Club
- St. Louis Circuit Attorney's Victim Services
- Harris Stowe State University
- St. Louis City Department of Health
- United Way 211
- Crime Victim Center
- PreventEd
- Journey Within Empowerment Center
- People's Health Center
- Thomas Dunn Learning Center
- BJC
- The GCI, Inc.
- Employment Connection
- St. Louis County Office of Violence Reduction
- Bellefontaine Neighbors Council
- Missouri Legislature

#### 4. Partner Announcements

- From Velma Bailey:
  - [https://cre2.wustl.edu/calendar\\_event/convo-with-sam-page/](https://cre2.wustl.edu/calendar_event/convo-with-sam-page/)
  - As the final event of her WashU residency, former St. Louis Mayor Tishaura Jones joins St. Louis County Executive Sam Page for a conversation reflecting on the opportunities and challenges of governing at the local level, from 4:30-6 p.m. Wednesday, April 29.
- From Poli Rijos:
  - May 9th: Children's Mental Health Day 2026
    - Time: 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM
    - Location: Deaconess Center for Child Well-Being, 1000 N Vandeventer Ave, St. Louis, MO 63113
    - <https://www.visionforchildren.org/events/>
  - May 24th: Nature and Nurture Festival
    - The Nature and Nurture Festival is a collaborative event between the St. Louis Zoo, Green Ribbon Gardens (a WildCare Center Funded Program), the Saint Louis Mental Health Board and the Dogtown Ecovillage. The event is being held in May to commemorate Children's Mental Health Awareness Month with the goal of encouraging children and families to incorporate nature into their lives for the mental and physical health benefits these experiences can bring.
    - Note: Priority registration is for residents of Wards 4, 9, and 10 which surround the zoo. After May 3, registration is open to all St.

Louis CITY residents. Register here: [bit.ly/ZNF2026](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZooNatureFest) or at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZooNatureFest>

# Nature & Nurture Festival

Join the Saint Louis Zoo, Green Ribbon Gardens, the Saint Louis Mental Health Board and the Dogtown Ecovillage for a collaborative event!

**Date:**  
May 24, 2026

**Time:**  
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

**Location:**  
McDonnell Center at River  
Camp at the Saint Louis Zoo,  
located near the  
River's Edge exit

The event is to commemorate Children's Mental Health Awareness Month with the goal of encouraging children and families to incorporate nature into their lives for the mental and physical health benefits these experiences can bring. The event will have several zoo and outside institutions' staff members facilitating tables with educational and interactive activities for children and their families.

#### Activities and Entertainment:

- Live Animal Experience
- Music
- Face Painting (11 a.m. - 1 p.m.)
- Scavenger Hunt
- and more!

#### Register Here:



[bit.ly/ZNF2026](https://bit.ly/ZNF2026)



- June 17th: Community Conversations: Suicide Prevention and Lethal Means Safety!
  - The St. Louis Regional Suicide Prevention Coalition and Safer Homes Collaborative are excited to announce that registration is open for our June event. Join us at Grant's View Library for a conversation on upstream suicide prevention focusing on firearm safety, early intervention, and community collaboration.
  - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/community-conversations-suicide-prevention-and-lethal-means-safety-tickets-1986679467768>
  - Registration is required, but admission is free, or you can purchase 2 Continuing Education (CE) credits for \$20. Please note, individuals need to stay throughout the whole session to receive credit. No partial credit will be awarded.
- From Dr. Kem Smith:

STATE REPRESENTATIVE TONYA RUSH AND STATE REPRESENTATIVE DR KEM SMITH  
INVITE YOU TO A

**FREE**

# GRANT WRITING SEMINAR





Join us for an insightful grant-writing seminar designed to help you master the process of obtaining federal and state-level grants.

BRING YOUR LAPTOPS

ENGAGING WORKSHOP

GRANT WRITER MATCHING

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

**MAY 7TH**  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

**ST LOUIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
HEALTH SCIENCE MPR  
ROOM 436  
400 PERSHALL RD.  
ST. LOUIS, MO, 63135



REGISTER




John Dudley, Project Manager  
Missouri Department of Economic Development

LaRhonda Wilson  
Director of Grants and Outreach for  
Congressman Wesley Bell

Contact Us  
1 (573) 751-9628

Visit Our Website  
State Representative Dr. Smith

201 W. Capitol Avenue Rm 135-BB  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

- From Tiffany Blanford:



## THRIVING BLACK MEN: BROTHERHOOD CONNECTION

PULL UP AND BE HEARD! JOIN US AND OTHER BOYS AND YOUNG MEN (AGES 10-29) AS WE DISCUSS OUR PLACE IN OUR COMMUNITY.

**APRIL 29TH, 2026**  
**5:30PM - 7:00PM**

**1405 N 16TH ST**  
**SAINT LOUIS, MO 63106**

Find more information on our website, or:  
Call: 557-204-5491  
Email: pni@usi-inc.org

- From Serena Muhammad:

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE PRESENTS  
**YOU WON'T BREAK MY SOUL**

4th Annual Mental Health Walk

**When:** Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2026  
**Time:** 9:00am-3:00pm

**Start of the Walk:** Northwest corner of West Florissant & Goodfellow  
**End of the Walk:** Herzog Elementary School  
5831 Pamplin Ave Saint Louis, MO 63147

The YMCA will sponsor a Family for 3 Months of Membership.

Sign Your Child Up Today!  
Come Connect with Local Organizations offering engaging Summer Programs. Don't miss this opportunity to secure a fun, safe and meanful summer experience!!

In Patnership With:

- From Eboni Hooper Boateng:

SAINT LOUIS  
**LYEC**

**SAVE THE DATE**

**LEVEL UP  
YOUTH  
CONFERENCE  
2026**

- Friday, November 6, 2026**
- SLU Busch Student Center**
- For High School Juniors, Seniors and their Teachers**
- FREE!**

**ABOUT**

The conference includes student chosen breakout sessions on career pathways, personal development, and financial literacy. There will also be a resource fair where students can connect with local non-profit organizations, post secondary training opportunities and employers. Students are encouraged to bring up to date resumes. Questions: [mbuchanan@biostl.org](mailto:mbuchanan@biostl.org)

5. Quarterly Meeting Evaluation

- <https://bit.ly/vpcapril2026>



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**2026 Quarterly Meeting Dates**

July 24, 2026, 1-3pm (In Person, Location TBD)

October 23, 2026, 1-3pm (Virtual)